

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1 and 3-33 are presented for consideration. Claims 1, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, and 26-33 are independent. Claims 1 and 15 have been amended to clarify features of the subject invention, while claims 25-33 have been added to recite additional features of the subject invention. Support for these changes and claims can be found in the original application, as filed. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Claims 17-22, withdrawn from consideration as being directed to a non-elected invention, have been retained in this application in order to preserve Applicants' rights. Applicants request that the Examiner contact their undersigned representative should it be necessary to cancel these claims in order to advance the subject application to issue.

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action.

Claims 1, 4, 6 and 9-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,373,515 to Wakabayashi et al. Claims 1, 6-8, 15 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,838,426 to Shinonaga et al. Claims 1 and 3-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,142,543, also to Wakabayashi et al. Claims 23 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over the Wakabayashi et al. '543 patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,434,173 to

Tuganov et al. Applicants submit that the cited art, whether taken individually or in combination, does not teach many features of the present invention, as previously recited in claims 1, 3-16, 23 and 24. Therefore, these rejections are respectfully traversed. Nevertheless, Applicants submit that independent claims 1 and 15, for example, as presented, amplify the distinctions between the present invention and the cited art.

In one aspect of the invention, independent claim 1 recites a laser oscillation apparatus. In another aspect of the invention, independent claim 15, recites an exposure apparatus using a laser oscillation apparatus as a light source. These claims define that the laser oscillation apparatus includes wavelength change means for driving a wavelength selection element and changing an oscillation wavelength of a laser beam to a target value, calculation means for calculating a drift amount of the oscillation wavelength generated immediately after oscillation starts, and a controller for driving the wavelength selection element by the wavelength change means on the basis of the calculated drift amount.

Applicants submit that the cited art does not teach or suggest such features of the present invention as recited in independent claims 1 and 15.

Applicants submit that the Wakabayashi et al. '515 patent, the Shinonaga et al. patent, the Wakabayashi et al. '543 patent and the Tuganov et al. patent merely discuss setting an oscillation wavelength of a laser beam to a desired value by driving a wavelength selection element.

Applicants submit that these patents do not teach or suggest at least feature of the present invention recited in independent claims 1 and 15 of calculating a drift amount of an oscillation

wavelength generated immediately after oscillation starts and driving a wavelength selection element by wavelength change means on the basis of the calculated drift amount. Accordingly, those patents, whether taken individually or in combination, do not teach or suggest the salient features of Applicants' present invention, as recited in independent claims 1 and 15.

Independent claims 26-29 relate to laser oscillation apparatus or exposure apparatus using a laser oscillation apparatus in which a controller determines whether a difference between a wavelength and a target value exceeds a predetermined value, or whether an idle time for stopping an oscillation exceeds a predetermined value. Independent claims 30-33 are method claims, which have been patterned after apparatus claims 26-29. Applicants further submit that the cited art, whether taken individually or in combination, does not teach or suggest the salient features of Applicants' present invention, as recited in independent claims 26-33, in which a determination is made whether a difference between a wavelength and a target value exceeds a predetermined value or whether an idle time for stopping an oscillation exceeds a predetermined value.

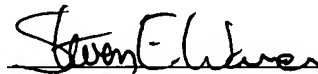
For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that the present invention, as recited in independent claims 1, 15 and 26-33, is patentably defined over the cited art, whether that art is taken individually or in combination.

The dependent claims also should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to those recited in their respective independent claims. Further individual consideration of these dependent claims is requested.

Applicants further submit that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance are requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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